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TAGS: [PREL](#) [SNAR](#) [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [AMGT](#) [VE](#)
SUBJECT: SPECIAL COORDINATOR FOR VENEZUELA MCCARTHY'S
MEETING WITH MFA VICE MINISTER HERNANDEZ - AUGUST 28

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Classified By: COUNSELOR FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS ROBERT DOWNES,
REASONS 1.4 (B) and (D)

11. (C) Summary. Special Coordinator for Venezuela McCarthy and Charge called August 28 on MFA Vice Minister for North America Mary Pili Hernandez. McCarthy pressed the BRV for counter-narcotics and counterterrorism cooperation and urged the BRV to promote continued strong bilateral commercial ties. They also raised reciprocity issues, including the pending U.S. request to open an American Presence Post in Maracaibo as well as the need for an immediate solution to the diplomatic cargo the BRV seized on August 24. Charge also raised the importance of Venezuela playing a useful role in Cuba's democratic transition. Making few promises in response, Hernandez instead blamed BRV inaction on domestic political constraints. She did pledge to ask the Ministry of Interior and Justice about CT data-sharing and to try to seek the release of the U.S. diplomatic cargo from the Defense Ministry. End Summary.

12. (U) Special Coordinator for Venezuela McCarthy called August 28 on Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) Vice Minister for North America Mary Pili Hernandez. McCarthy was joined by the Charge, Venezuela Desk Officer Cue, and Poloff for the one-hour meeting. Hernandez was accompanied by MFA Desk Officer Isaedul Hernandez.

Counternarcotics

13. (C) McCarthy urged the BRV to do more with regional partners to counter drug-trafficking, stressing our common law enforcement interests. Hernandez responded that the BRV is committed to cutting off the flow of drugs into and through Venezuela, but said Venezuela's efforts are complicated by surrounding drug producing countries and Venezuela's geography. The MFA Vice Minister claimed, without command of details, that the BRV was working well with regional and European partners and is making important seizures inside Venezuela.

14. (C) McCarthy raised the importance of signing the addendum to our counternarcotics agreement, explaining that we need to work together against narco-traffickers. Hernandez said she had hoped that the BRV would have been able to sign as a practical reality, but said the U.S. announcement of the new

DNI manager for Cuba and Venezuela makes it politically impossible for the BRV to sign right now. McCarthy disputed the linkage. Hernandez punted, noting that she hoped the BRV would find the "political space" to sign at an unspecified, "less strident" time. Charge also raised the importance of issuing a visa to the incoming DEA Chief, noting that National Anti-Drug Chief Luis Correa suggested no visa would be issued until the addendum was signed.

Counterterrorism Data-Sharing

15. (C) McCarthy raised ongoing U.S. concerns that BRV law enforcement authorities do not respond to U.S. data requests regarding the movements of suspected terrorists and other persons on the USG's "no fly" list. McCarthy underscored that Venezuela should share a common interest in combating international terrorism. Charge raised a specific, recent case of BRV lack of cooperation with respect to an individual on the no-fly list to illustrate the severity of the problem. Noting that she was not aware of any BRV instructions to stop the flow of such information to U.S. officials, Hernandez said she would raise the issue with Interior and Justice Minister Jesse Chacon.

Commercial Relations

16. (C) McCarthy also underscored the importance the United States attaches to its commercial relations with Venezuela. She highlighted the USG's efforts to reach out to private companies doing business in Venezuela and urged the BRV to do the same with Venezuelan firms doing business in the United States. MFA Vice Minister for North America Hernandez said

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the BRV is interested in promoting commerce between Venezuela and the United States, despite "our political differences." Noting that politics, "so far," had not interfered in the bilateral economic relationship, Hernandez praised Amb. Brownfield for averting a potential commercial airline trade war.

Cuba

17. (C) Citing A/S Shannon's recent statements on Cuba, McCarthy underscored that a democratic transition has started in Cuba and stressed that such a transition must be allowed to take place. Charge added that Venezuela has an opportunity to play a helpful role in promoting and defending the same democratic rights that Venezuelans hold dear. Hernandez responded that Cuba and Venezuela have an "entirely different" conception of democracy than the United States and that Venezuela does not "want an attack from Miami."

18. (C) Charge rejected Hernandez's suggestion that there are different notions of democracy; the region had agreed on what democracy is, and that Cuba has a dictatorship. He further rejected Hernandez's suggestion that there was a threat of attack from Miami. The real issue at stake in Cuba, he said, is whether the Cuban people will get the freedoms they deserve, and the freedoms that we in this hemisphere have determined are their rights: the freedom of expression, the freedom to form political parties, the freedom to choose their own leaders, and the freedom not to be jailed for their political beliefs. As a journalist, Charge noted, Hernandez should be especially sensitive to the lack of such freedoms in Cuba. Charge said that our position is that this is a unique opportunity for Venezuela, which has a long tradition of a free press and of democratic government, to play a useful role in the transition to democracy in Cuba.

¶9. (C) Asserting that Venezuela would never be able to "repay" the health and education support provided by the Cuban government, the MFA Vice Minister predicted the BRV "would be with the Cuban people under any circumstance." In the event of a crisis, Hernandez said Venezuela would "alleviate suffering." She opined, however, that the death of Castro would not create a crisis, as the "people of Cuba" would sustain their government under "new leadership." Charge repeated that Cuba did not need a succession of the same dictatorship, but rather a democratic transition.

Reciprocity Issues

¶10. (C) Regarding the USG's pending request to open an American Presence Post in Maracaibo, Hernandez once again blamed BRV inaction on "internal politics." She stressed the BRV's sensitivity to the fact that Maracaibo is a stronghold of unity opposition candidate and Zulia Governor Manuel Roseles. McCarthy reminded Hernandez that Venezuela currently maintains eight consulates in the United States. Charge also requested resolution of the BRV's August 24 search and seizure of diplomatic cargo and the household effects of a diplomat. Noting that President Chavez was involved in this issue, Hernandez pledged to try to secure the Ministry of Defense's support for a diplomatic solution. Hernandez then engaged in a lengthy soliloquy on the importance of handling such matters through diplomatic channels, and not as a media show. Charge agreed, but noted that sometimes circumstances force one's hand. (Note: For all her impassioned plea for discretion, as we left the meeting we learned that Hernandez had just issued a press release on her protest note to the Embassy on this incident.)

¶11. (C) Hernandez lamely blamed previous accreditation delays on staffing gaps, but assured McCarthy and the Charge that the MFA is "caught up." Charge urged Hernandez to dig deeper; the backlog, while reduced, continues. Hernandez noted that the Venezuelan Embassy in Washington received a U.S. diplomatic note August 28 in which the U.S. announced its intention to delay the accreditation of Venezuelan diplomatic officials in the United States by eight weeks. McCarthy noted that the diplomatic note "crossed in the mail." The USG will not enforce the measure if not merited,

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but implementation depends on continued expeditious functioning of the MFA's visa and accreditation process.

I'm Your Friend, Really

¶12. (C) Hernandez concluded the meeting by affirming her commitment to improve bilateral relations. "Someone with my high profile," she continued, "is in this job to resolve problems, not to break relations." Asked about the literal writing on the wall ("Uh, Ah, la Vice no se va" or "Hey, Hey, the Vice Minister is here to stay!," was written and left on the meeting room white board), Hernandez looked embarrassed and half-heartedly chocked the note up to an over-exuberant office birthday party. She gave no indication that new Foreign Minister Maduro intended to move or release her, but strongly implied that anyone coming behind her would be even more hardline.

¶13. (U) Special Coordinator for Venezuela McCarthy did not have an opportunity to review this cable before departing Caracas.

WHITAKER